



STORAGE NEWS

NEXT-GENERATION SATA

Western Digital has launched a new hard disk drive range with a Serial ATA (SATA) 300MB/s interface. This has double the bandwidth of standard SATA. Western Digital has gone to pains to avoid using the SATA II moniker and the SATA organisation has pointed out that a 300MB/s transfer rate is only one condition of full SATA II compatibility. The first drive in the WD Caviar SE16 range has a capacity of 250GB. It should be in shops priced around £150 by the time you read this.

SONY MULTI-FORMAT DUAL

Sony has released two new drives: the internal DRU-800A and external FireWire-connected DRX-800UL. Both can write double-layer discs (from the DVD Alliance, home of the DVD+ standard) and dual-layer discs (from the DVD Forum, originators of the DVD- format). While this naming convention is bound to confuse the layman looking for a DVD burner, the very fact that these drives support both standards makes things simpler. The DRU-800A is priced around £50 and the DRX-800UL around £150.

BLUE-RAY GOES FOUR-LAYER?

Amid the breakdown of talks to bring together two competing future optical disk standards, HD DVD and Blue-Ray, TDK has announced the feasibility of a four-layer 100GB recordable Blue-Ray disc. This is a blow for the HD DVD party, which was boosted by Toshiba's earlier announcement of a triple-layer 45GB disc.

REVIEW SECURITY DEVICE

XKEY XKey 1.0

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE 265MB from £120 inc VAT

DETAILS www.xkey.co.uk

XKey makes using shared PCs, such as at internet cafes, safer. It has two partitions and its own processor. The first is read-only and stores all the security software; the remaining space on the drive is used as your data storage. It's available on a range of thumb drives, including those made by Disgo.

The first line of defence is password protection for the drive. All data written to it is also subject to 128-bit encryption. When the drive



initialises on a computer, it runs anti-key-logging software. This blocks any attempts by malicious code to record your passwords or other data as you type.

A McAfee-powered virus checker scans system memory for bad code and locks down the drive if it finds any. This provides genuine security while you work. The XKey also ensures you leave no trace, by deleting Internet Explorer files automatically.

The XKey is an affordable way to secure public computers, but if you just want to move files around, a standard thumb drive is better value.

David McKinnon

✓ Provides protection on public computers

✗ No means of password recovery

SPECIFICATIONS Password protection, anti-virus software, internet history deletion

REVIEW PORTABLE HARD DRIVE

WESTERN DIGITAL Passport

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £100 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.technoworld.com

DETAILS www.westerndigital.com



Western Digital's rubber-bottomed Passport looks like expensive diving equipment, but we suggest you keep it above sea level so no harm comes to the enclosed 80GB hard disk. It's little bigger than a PDA and weighs just 238g so it's easy to carry in your pocket, but it doesn't have an integrated USB lead so you'll have to carry one of those too.

The rubber base mutes operational noise from the drive and provides a modicum of protection against knocks and drops, although we'd still

advise you to exercise caution when handling the unit. When tested, file transfer times were what we expected.

Large file read and write transfer rates were 22.7MB/s and 22.8MB/s, while small file read and write transfer rates were 8.3MB/s and 6.3MB/s. While slower than LaCie's 60GB Mobile Hard Disk in our *Hotlist* below, the Passport provides more storage for your money at only £1.25 per GB.

This is a great drive, combining excellent transfer times, a solid build, visual appeal and good value.

David McKinnon

✓ Robust portable storage at an attractive price

✗ No integrated USB lead

SPECIFICATIONS Portable hard disk, 80GB (74.5GB formatted), USB Hi-Speed interface. Part code WDXML800UETE



HOTLIST DVD WRITER

LG GSA-4163B

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £40 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.cclonline.com

DETAILS www.lge.com



Winner of our July 2005 DVD writer group test, LG's GSA-4163B has since dropped its price by an incredible £12. It's still available with its impressive software bundle and is one of the few drives to offer DVD-RAM compatibility. Compatibility isn't its only asset, though: it was also one of the fastest drives in the test, burning a full DVD+R in five minutes 36 seconds.

SPECIFICATIONS 16X DVD+R, 16X DVD-R, 8X DVD+RW, 6X DVD-RW, 4X DVD+R DL, 3X DVD-RAM, 40X CD-R, 24X CD-RW. Part code GSA-4163B



HOTLIST EXTERNAL HARD DISK

LACIE Mobile Hard Drive 60GB

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £80 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.dabs.com

DETAILS www.lacie.co.uk



The Mobile Hard Drive has a winning combination of portability, capacity and price. A 60GB Samsung 2.5" hard disk is used and the unit weighs just 165g. It connects to your computer and draws power through a USB2 interface. This provides lots of bandwidth, with average transfer rates of 27MB/s for large files and 10.2MB/s for small files. An effective way to double your notebook's hard disk space.

SPECIFICATIONS 60GB capacity, USB2 interface, USB powered. Part code 300753



HOTLIST INTERNAL HARD DISK

MAXTOR DiamondMax 10 300GB SATA

RATING ★★★★★

PRICE £126 inc VAT

SUPPLIER www.savastore.com

DETAILS www.maxtor.com



The DiamondMax 10 replaces Maxtor's DiamondMax 9 series of hard disks and is an even better drive. It has 16MB of cache and a SATA interface, making this 300GB hard disk the fastest we've seen. This disk is also extremely good value. If you're looking for more storage then this is the best drive to buy.

SPECIFICATIONS 3.5" internal hard disk, 300GB capacity, 279GB formatted capacity (NTFS), SATA/150 interface, 7200rpm spin speed, 16MB cache. Part code 6B300S0

